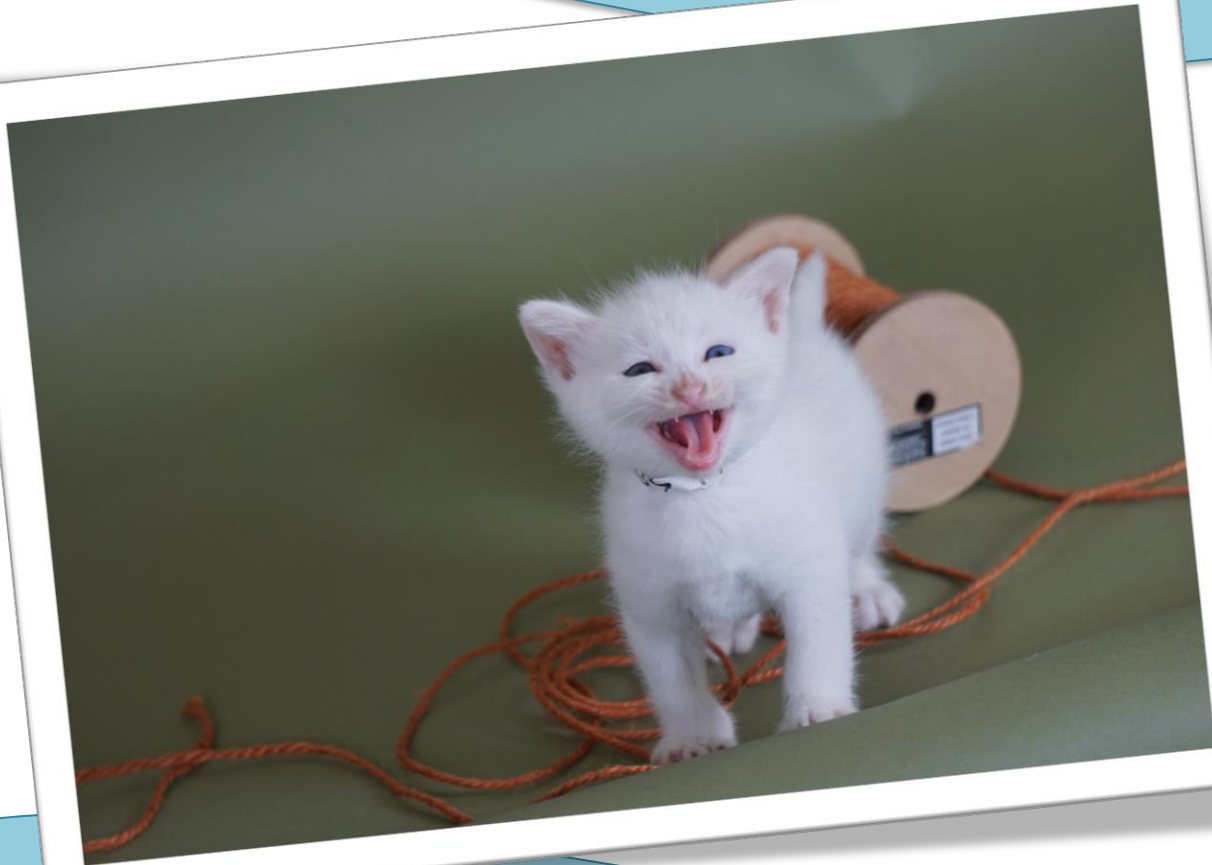


# Cat and Kitten Foster Manual



Riverside County Department of  
Animal Services

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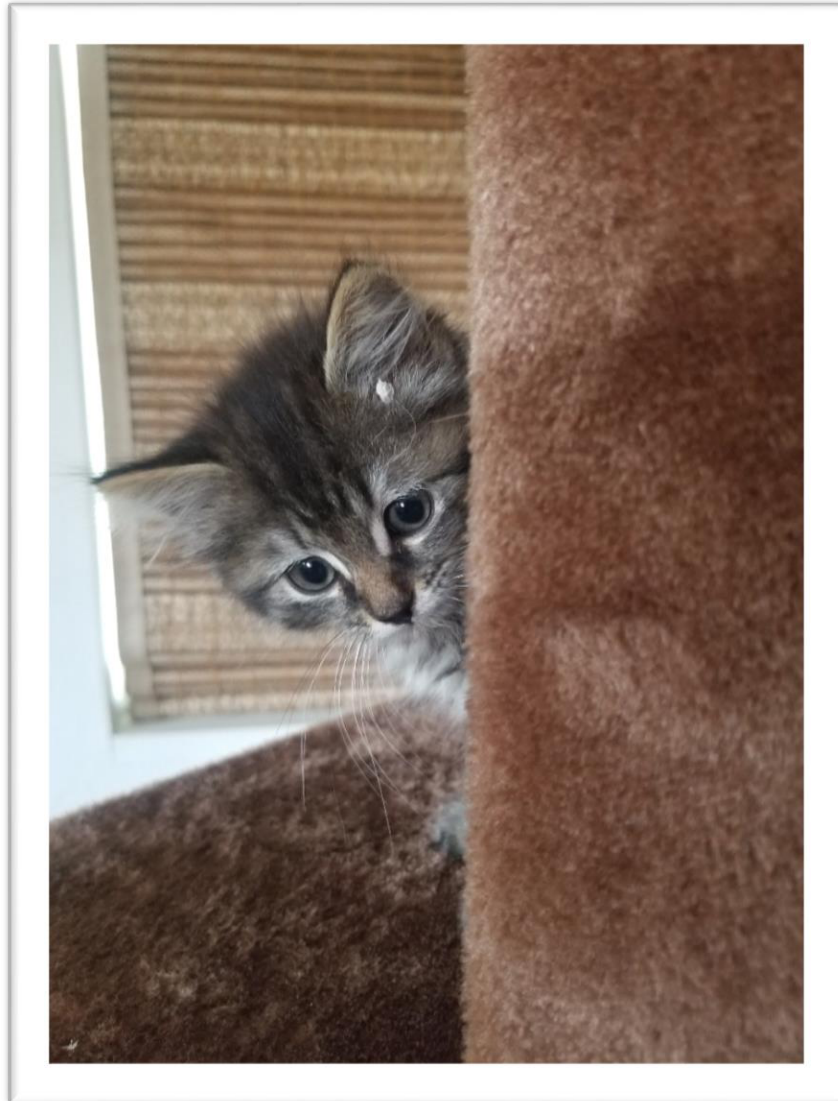
## Cat and Kitten Foster Care Program

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## **Riverside County Department of Animal Services thanks YOU!**

Thank you for opening your home and your heart to a kitten or cat in need. Whether you foster a kitten who needs some time to grow, or an adult cat who needs a little extra TLC, you make it possible for us to provide the very best care for all of our residents at Riverside County Department of Animal Services. Fostering is messy, rewarding, stinky, adorable, and sometimes a heartbreaking job. We certainly could not provide the level of care we do without valuable foster homes like yours.



From all our cats and kittens:

**Thank You!**

## Greetings, Foster Parents!

Thank you for participating in the Riverside County Department of Animal Services' Foster Care Program. We appreciate your willingness to open your heart and home to homeless cats and kittens. Your dedication allows our organization to save more underage kittens.

The guiding mission of the Cat Foster Care Program is to give cats and kittens the individualized care, and socialization they need to prepare them for adoption. Information gathered during the foster process helps us place cats and kittens in homes and with families who can best meet their needs. Specific goals of the program include:

- Providing a safe, healthy, nurturing environment for mother cats to raise their kittens, or underage kittens without their mother
- Socializing shy or timid cats, and kittens
- Giving our long-term residents time away from the shelter in a home setting
- Allowing mother cats to recover in a relaxing, uplifting environment
- Allowing cats time to heal with special medical needs

This manual outlines the responsibilities and expectations of Riverside County Department of Animal Services' foster volunteers. This should serve as a resource throughout your foster care experience.

Before taking your assigned foster cats or kittens home, please:

- Review the overview of key responsibilities and policies
- Complete a foster family information sheet
- Read and sign the foster care agreement
- Give the completed Foster Family Information Sheet and the signed Foster Care Agreement to the foster coordinator. If the foster coordinator is not available, give the forms to a Riverside County Department of Animal Services staff person.

## Overview of Key Responsibilities and Policies

To ensure a successful foster program, we ask that you follow our general policy guidelines to ensure that each foster home is responsibly providing a wonderful home for these kittens to grow up and explore the world in. To this effect, you will want to keep in mind the following:

1. Keep cats/kittens inside at all times.
2. Cats/kittens should be in a carrier at all times when leaving the house.
3. Keep doors/windows closed at all times, unless covered with a screen that is securely in place. The window should only be open no more than 1 inch with a support in place so the window cannot be opened any further. A frightened cat/kitten can escape through the tiniest holes!
4. If a cat/kitten does manage to get outside, you must attempt to get the cat/kitten back inside immediately. If you delay, the cat/kitten may get frightened and run away, decreasing your chances of getting the kitten back inside. Do not chase the cat/kitten as this may make him/her run further away from your home. The easiest way to get your mother cat back to your home is to put her kittens in a secure carrier by the door or window that she went out. The kittens should cry for her, and her maternal instincts will kick in bringing her back to them. Often mother cats will come back in to the house or foster room to be with the kittens. If this is not working, you can also place her litter box outside your door so she will smell where she needs to come back in. Most mother cats were strays and are familiar with being outside, but that does not mean that they all have 'street smarts'. Some will hide and be scared as soon as they get out. Look under bushes, decks, foundations, etc. If the mother cat is injured, she may be silently hiding as to not attract predators. *If you cannot get the kitten yourself within 1-2 hours, call the Foster Coordinator to determine a strategy to recapture the kitten. Riverside County Department of Animal Services has humane traps available for this purpose*
5. When fostering a cat who tested positive for FIV (Feline Infectious Virus) the cat must remain segregated from the other animals in your home for the duration of the stay.
6. When fostering a mother cat who has not tested positive for FeLV or FIV, it is important to keep her and kittens separated from your other animals for at least two weeks to ensure they are healthy. A seemingly fine cat can become ill due to stress from a move. Foster kittens must not be introduced to your resident cats unless your resident cats are indoor only cats. Kittens must be vaccinated for more than 5 days before they can meet any of your household pets and these visits should be limited and supervised. Food dishes, water bowls, and litter boxes must

be picked up so they do not use each other's boxes or bowls, or they should meet in an area where litter boxes and food/water dishes are not present.

## **Kitten-Proofing Your Foster Room and Home**

Cat-proofing and especially kitten-proofing your home is much the same as child-proofing it! That means hiding or removing cords, removing small items that kittens can choke on, etc.

To begin, your foster room should be COMPLETELY cleared out and only consist of basic cat necessities (i.e. bed, food, water, litterbox, and toys). This means removing all toiletries and decorative items from the bathtub, counters, or any other surface the kittens can access. Kittens love to play with anything they can get their paws on and could be injured by heavy or sharp items.

Make sure to put your foster supplies in a separate room. Please do not leave them out for your foster kittens to get into

Once your kittens are vaccinated and clear of any illness, you may decide to have them visit other areas of your home or interact with your resident pets. These visits should be short and well supervised. DO NOT give the kittens free reign of your home unsupervised. They can get injured, lost, have accidents outside the litter box, etc.

Before introducing your kittens to other areas of your home, please do a thorough walkthrough, and keep the following concerns in mind:

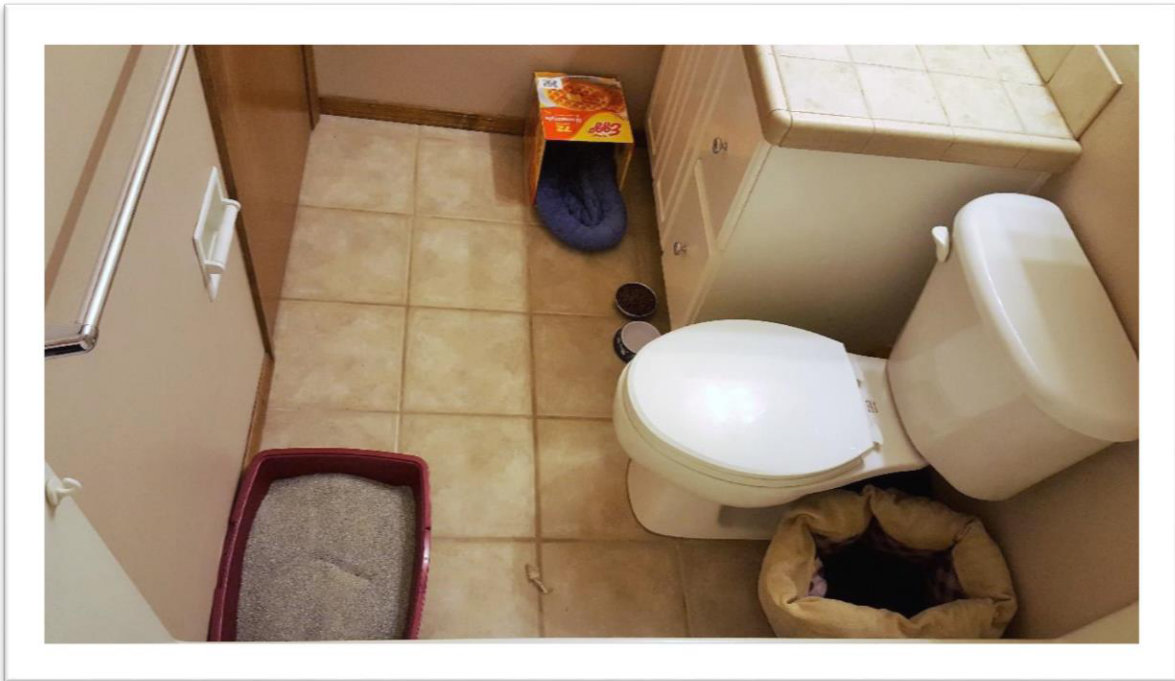
- Kittens might chew on electrical cords resulting in burns or even death. Protect your electrical cords with plastic tubing or by spraying them with "Bitter Apple", a bitter tasting deterrent that you can find at pet stores.
- Kittens can choke on small items. Keep rubber bands, paper clips, needles, – anything kitten can swallow – out of reach.
- Keep plastic bags, which can cause suffocation, out of reach.
- Secure any heavy items that could fall and potentially injure them.
- Refrain from using any hot appliances while the kittens are out. Kittens are naturally curious and could get burned.
- Review the toxic houseplant list at [www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants](http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants) and remove all poisonous plants from your household. Or, to deter kitties from munching on poisonous and non-poisonous plants, you should spray the plants with a product sold at pet stores for this very purpose.

## Housing

*You must provide a clean, safe environment for your foster cats/kittens. Riverside County Department of Animal Services recommends that you ALWAYS start your kittens in a non-carpeted, easily sanitized room in the unlikely event that your kittens have a contagious illness that cannot be removed from carpeting. If you end up with a contagious illness in a carpeted room, you will either have to remove the carpeting or not use that room for fostering ever again. Kittens can be moved to a carpeted room after a 2-week quarantine period if they are not showing signs of illness. Riverside County Department of Animal Services recommends a bathroom or an unused bedroom as your foster room.*

If you are fostering a pregnant cat or young kittens, keep the following tips in mind:

- Consider protecting your furniture and carpet with sheets or plastic table covers. Kittens can be messy, especially when they're learning to use the litter box! Make sure sheets/ covers are securely tacked down so kittens can't get under them.
- Until the age of 3-4 weeks, the mother cat will clean the genitals of her young to stimulate the bowels and bladder. As the kittens start showing interest in the litter box, provide them with an easily accessible box – such as a shoebox lid, cookie sheet, or cake pan. Once the kittens are more mobile, you should give them a larger litter box. Dollar stores have lots of inexpensive options.



## Litter Box

Kittens should be introduced to the litter box when they start eating solid foods. They need a box with shallow sides: a cookie sheet or cake pan is perfect. After they have eaten, place them in the box. They will learn how to use the litter box very quickly. Sometimes they learn how to use the litter box without any help from us, as they have been watching Mom use her box.

Observe how the kittens watch all of Mom's actions: they find her quite fascinating and are learning how to act like cats by observing her.

Orphans may need a little more assistance from you. Simply pick them up and place them on the litter after each meal. When you bring home your foster kittens, show them where you placed their litter box. Keeping the box clean is very important...daily cleaning is a must. Riverside County Department of Animal Services recommends cleaning the litter box at least two or three times a day. No cat or kitten wants to use or smell a dirty litter box. Make sure the litter box is as far away from the food and water as possible. Place the bed near the food, not the litter box.

When first learning to use a litter box, kittens do best with store-bought recycled paper litter or clay litter. Once the kittens are older (around 8 weeks old) you can give them clumping litter. Please do not use clumping litter with kittens under 8 weeks.



*Clumping litter for older kittens*



*Recycled paper litter for younger kittens*



## Expenses and Donations

Riverside County Department of Animal Services covers all medical care expenses for foster cats if performed at Riverside County Department of Animal Services on-site veterinary clinic, or at other veterinary clinics approved in advance. Riverside County Department of Animal Services will not reimburse any personal expenses incurred by foster parents for unauthorized veterinary care; seeking veterinary care for your foster cat or kittens at a clinic other than Riverside County Department of Animal Services on-site hospital is not permitted without explicit Riverside County Department of Animal Services staff approval.

### Items to keep track of:

- Food
- Food/water bowls
- Litter
- Litter box
- Toys
- Scratchers/scratch trees
- Mileage to and from the shelter or adoption events

Expenses that you incur during your term as foster parent, whether for supplies or medical care, cannot be applied to an adoption fee. These expenses, however, may be considered a tax-deductible donation. Keep all receipts and ask for an in-kind donation form once your litter is adopted or returned.

Riverside County Department of Animal Services will provide you with food and litter. It is best to keep the foster kittens on the same food that we feed at the shelter so as not to cause digestive upset when they return.



**Always consult a tax professional to determine whether your foster expenses are tax-deductible.**

## How to Pick Up Your Foster Kittens

Once you are interested a kitten(s) and have called or emailed to make sure they are ready for you to pick up, please go to the front desk at the shelter and check-in. From there, shelter staff will get your foster supplies as well as any forms needed.

Make sure that each of these steps is completed while you are picking up your kittens:

- You will receive supplies, a carrier, and your kittens
- You will also receive a bag of dry kitten food, a few cans of wet kitten food and litter if needed
- You will need to sign the Foster Agreement

## Naming Your Kittens

Please feel free to name your fosters. Upon impound all animals are given Animal I.D. numbers, having a name makes marketing these cuties a breeze! Please do not change your fosters names once we have added them to our database.



### Quick tips on naming your kittens:

Theme your kittens' names for easier marketing. The "Cheese-Group," above, were named Cheddar, Provolone, Gouda, Parmesan, and Mozzarella.

The shelter strives to feed a consistent diet to provide the best support for the mother cat, the best start for the babies, and an easier transition to the diet they will be fed when they return to the shelter.

The temperature in the foster room should be kept a little warmer, especially for the first two weeks after birth. This is even more important if the kittens are orphans - ideally the temperature should be around 80F for the first two weeks. If you aren't able to heat your whole room to that temperature, you can use Snuggle Safe warming disks and make sure the nesting box is well insulated. Be sure that the mom and kittens have the option to get away from the warming disks if desired.

Handle newborns gently, but make sure to check on them at least twice a day. Are they nursing? Hanging out with mom? Crying a lot (this could be an indication that they are cold or not getting enough milk). Make sure to count each time you check on them. Sometimes a mother cat will take a kitten out of the nest and leave it somewhere else in the room. If this happens, put the kitten back in the nest. If you would like, you are more than welcome to weigh your kittens. You want to see them gain 10-15 grams per day.



**Be careful!** *Mother cats can be very protective of their young and become overly aggressive toward resident pets. This means watchful attention when entering or leaving the area you have set aside for mom and her babies.*

If all kittens and mom seem well, your only obligation to the mom and new kittens for the first week or so is watchful supervision. Mom will need kitten food and water at all times. Contact us immediately if you observe any of the following in the mother cat:

- Acts lethargic, or as if she is in pain or continues to strain.
- Ignores her kittens.
- Continues bleeding from the vulva for more than two days.
- Has painful, hard, or swollen mammary glands.

Kittens should be nursing up to 3 times an hour. The mother cat should be grooming each kitten after feeding, and licking their bottoms to stimulate elimination. Contact us if you observe any of the following in the kittens:

- Constant crying and failure to stay at the nipple.
- Refusal to nurse.
- Feels cold to the touch.
- Withdrawing from the other kittens.
- Rejected or ignored by the mother.



**Be careful!** *Children love to play with kittens, but they may not understand how to properly handle them. Please keep in mind that **children should not handle kittens under three weeks of age** and **you must not allow unsupervised handling of any kitten by children under the age of 10.***

## Socializing Your Foster Cats and Kittens

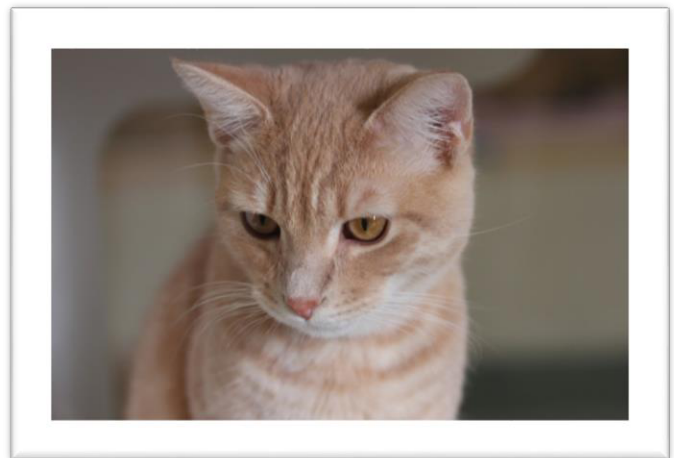
First and foremost, we ask that you treat your foster cats/kittens with the same love and care that you give to your own companion animals. Daily attention (at least one full hour a day) from you and other family members or friends makes them more people-oriented, and more adoptable. This includes petting, playing, cuddling, trimming nails, and grooming.

By spending time with your foster cats on a regular basis, you will not only increase their chances of being adopted quickly, but you will also be able to determine their likes and dislikes – this helps us place them in homes with families that best meet their needs.

You should also monitor your foster cats for behavior problems, such as inappropriate urination or scratching furniture. If problems arise, contact us to discuss behavior modification strategies. Riverside County Department of Animal Services is not responsible for damages that might occur to yourself, others in your household, or your personal property as a result of feline behavior problems while in foster care.

### Special Care

Semi-feral kittens are a special challenge. These kittens can be socialized, but only with daily handling. Sometimes they will hiss and spit when you attempt to pick them up. Gently pick them up and hold them close to your body, giving them a sense of security. Speak softly as you pet them. These kittens need plenty of reassurance and attention. **DO NOT give them a room in which they can hide from you.** They need a box or crate in which to feel secure but you must have access to them at all times. They will not become socialized unless they are handled many times each day. They need to become accustomed to the sights and sound of people and a working home. This should be done gradually but consistently.



## Feeding and Growth

### Kittens with Mom:

The recommended diet for pregnant or nursing cats and their kittens is a premium diet of canned and dry kitten food. Kittens generally start showing interest in “real” food around 4 or 5 weeks of age. Canned food should be fed 3-4 times a day in small amounts (one quarter of a 3 oz. wet food can). Dry food should be left out all day for them.

### Kittens without Mom:

Newborn to four weeks: As a foster parent you will have the double responsibility of bottle-feeding and socialization.

## Bottle Feeding

### When to bottle feed a kitten:

If we receive a kitten that is too young to eat on their own, has been abandoned, refuses to eat, or if the mother cat is no longer nursing her kittens, or her milk has dried up, we then need to bottle feed the kitten. A mother cat's milk can dry up when mother cats are sick, on medications, or too stressed. (Please make sure that mom cat is getting proper care). Supplemental bottle feeding can also be helpful when a kitten loses weight or fails to gain weight for a 7 day period, even if it is still nursing on mom. In this case, you will only be “topping off” the kitten after it nurses.

**Note:** If you think your kittens need to be bottle fed or supplementally fed, please speak to the foster coordinator before beginning bottle feeding. This can be a tricky process!

*Watch the Kitten Lady Youtube channel for tips and tricks*

Foster parents will need the following supplies for bottle feeding:

- Snuggle Safe disc or other device designed for animals
- Cat carrier or cardboard box for kitten nest
- Fleece blankets, cloth diapers, etc. for bedding
- Milk replacer formula
- Nursing bottle with nipples
- Cotton balls or gauze pads
- Thermometer
- Scale

## How to bottle feed a kitten:

Warmth first! Heat kittens slowly so that you do not put them into shock. You can do this with a towel that has been heated in the dryer, place them on a towel that is resting on a Snuggle Safe disc, or tuck a kitten under your shirt and use your own body heat. While heating the kitten, gently massage the body and extremities to get blood flowing throughout the body.

Never let a kitten lie on a heat source without cover. Make sure that they have space to crawl off the heat source if they get too warm. Constantly check the warmth of the heat source to make sure it cannot burn the kitten, and that it is staying warm enough.

Kittens cannot maintain their own body temperature. The average rectal temperature of a newborn kitten ranges between 92-97 degrees. Between 2-21 days old, a kitten's temperature will be about 96 – 100 degrees. You will need to build the kitten a nest to keep it warm. The temperature in the nest where the kitten is kept should be 86 degrees. The temperature can be lowered 5 degrees a week thereafter until a mild 75 degrees is reached. To create a good nest, place them in a carrier and put a towel or blanket over the carrier to trap in the heat. You can also do this with a cardboard box.

Estimated Kitten Age (weeks)	Kitten Weight (lbs, oz)	Kitten Weight (grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement*	Amount of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number of Feedings Per Day***
< 1 week	2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	15 ml	2 ml	7
	3 oz	85 g	17 kcal	23 ml	3 ml	7
	4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	31 ml	5 ml	7
1 week	5 oz	142 g	28 kcal	38 ml	6 ml	7
	6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	46 ml	7 ml	7
	7 oz	198 g	40 kcal	54 ml	8 ml	7
2 weeks	8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	61 ml	9 ml	7
	9 oz	255 g	51 kcal	69 ml	10 ml	7
	10 oz	283 g	57 kcal	77 ml	11 ml	7
3 weeks*	11 oz	312 g	62 kcal	84 ml	12 ml	6-7
	12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	92 ml	14 ml	6-7
	13 oz	369 g	74 kcal	100 ml	15 ml	6
4 weeks*	14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	107 ml	16 ml	5
	15 oz	425 g	85 kcal	115 ml	17 ml	5
	16 oz (1 lb)	454 g	91 kcal	123 ml	18 ml	5
5 weeks*	1 lb, 1 oz	482 g	96 kcal	130 ml	19 ml	4
	1 lb, 2 oz	510 g	102 kcal	138 ml	20 ml	4
	1 lb, 3 oz	539 g	108 kcal	146 ml	22 ml	4
5 weeks*	1 lb, 4 oz	567 g	113 kcal	153 ml	23 ml	4

Table by Maddie's Fund

It is important not to overfeed or underfeed your kitten. Overfeeding can cause serious health problems that begin with diarrhea, and end with dehydration. One way to tell whether you're consistently feeding too much is the appearance of grayish stool. On the

other hand, a kitten who is not fed enough will cry continuously, appear restless, and then listless. Refer to the above table for how much and how often to feed your kitten.

Check your bottle's nipple to see if formula drips from its tip. If it does not, you will need to widen the hole. You can do this by using a hot needle to poke a larger hole, or use a razor blade to make a small "x" in the top. Do not make it too wide though. You only want the formula to drip slowly, not pour, out of the nipple.

Be sure you sterilize the bottle and nipple before each feeding, and warm the formula to no more than 100 degrees. Test the formula on your wrist – it should feel warm, not hot.

### **Start feeding:**

Place your kitten on its stomach on a towel so they can grip the towel with their nails. Lift their head to a 45 degree angle. Squeeze a small drop of formula on to the tip of the nipple. Insert the nipple into their mouth (you may have to open their mouth for them). The angle will help keep air from entering their stomach and will keep milk at the front of the nipple. NEVER HOLD THE KITTEN ON THEIR BACK OR IN THE AIR WHEN YOU FEED THEM.

When your kitten is full, their tummy will be slightly rounded and bubbles will form around their mouth. If the kitten has not finished the bottle, do not force the kitten to swallow the rest of the milk.

If the kitten is not drinking well, you can use a toothbrush to brush down their sides. This mimics a mother's tongue and will often soothe them. They should nurse from the bottle better using this technique.

### **Burping your kitten:**

Just like human babies, kittens need to be burped. Hold the kitten up against your shoulder, pat and rub them gently on their back. Not all kittens will burp every time. If the kitten did not finish her bottle, you can offer it to them again.

### **Stimulating your kitten:**

Kittens younger than 3 weeks of age cannot eliminate by themselves – they need your help. After feeding and burping the kitten, take a washcloth or gauze moistened with warm water and rub over the kitten's stomach and bottom. The action mimics a mother cat's licking and stimulates the kitten to relieve themselves. Kittens need to be stimulated to eliminate after every meal. Rub until you see evidence of urine and/or stool. A kitten should urinate with every feeding, but it may only defecate 2-3 times daily.

### **Washing your kitten after the meal:**

Make sure you wash your kitten(s) after every meal. Kittens are messy and will need the simulation of the mother's tongue. To mimic this, you will need to get a damp warm

washcloth and stroke the kitten from head to tail with short “licks” like mom would. Make sure you gently towel dry the kitten when you are done. Never submerge your kitten in water.

## Dietary Habits with Growth

- At **four weeks**, you can start introducing canned food (they usually start showing interest in what mom is eating). Mixing a little warm water with the canned food and placing it in a container with low sides (plate, small dish, etc.) will usually do the trick. Expect them to walk through it too. No one ever said kittens were neat. After a few attempts, they will get the idea. Feed them their last meal just before bedtime. They usually eat and then go straight to sleep. You can warm the food in the microwave for about 6 seconds. Make sure to stir the food and test it with your finger. Do not give hot food to kittens.
- **5-6 weeks old:** three small (approximately one quarter of a three ounce can) meals of canned food per day per kitten. If that is too much food in the beginning you can adjust accordingly. Always leave plenty of dry food out for them to eat during the day.
- **6-8 weeks of age:** three meals a day (about one quarter of a can) per kitten, and free feed dry food. Always keep dry kibble out at all times for the kittens to eat.

Overfeeding can cause digestive problems. Frequent small meals are preferred to large meals.

**All cats and kittens need fresh water at all times.**

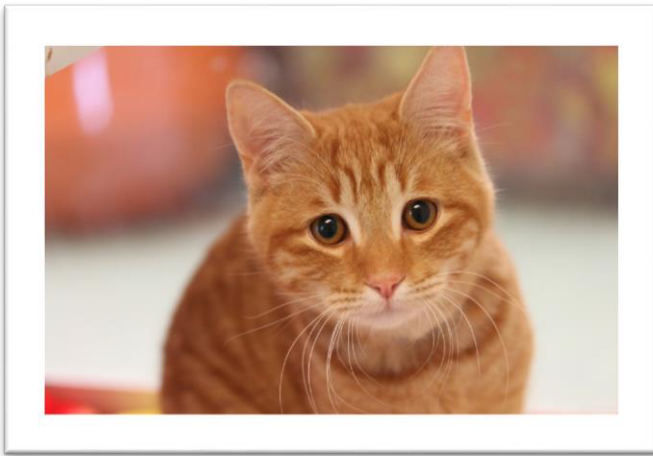




## Medical Records

When you pick up your kittens, you should receive copies of their medical records. These records give you an approximate date of birth, weight at time of intake, what medical services have been done, and what things your mom cat and kittens still need to have done, such as **vaccines, deworming, etc., and when these things are due**. We need your help to make sure these things get done on time and that the records get updated.

Riverside County Department of Animal Services does its best to track this, but there are usually 150 moms and kittens in foster care at any given time during kitten season. Stuff happens, things get missed. **It is YOUR responsibility as a foster parent to help us make sure that your foster cat and kittens are vaccinated and de-wormed when they are due.** You will bring the kittens to the shelter for vaccinations and de-worming.



### Vaccination Records

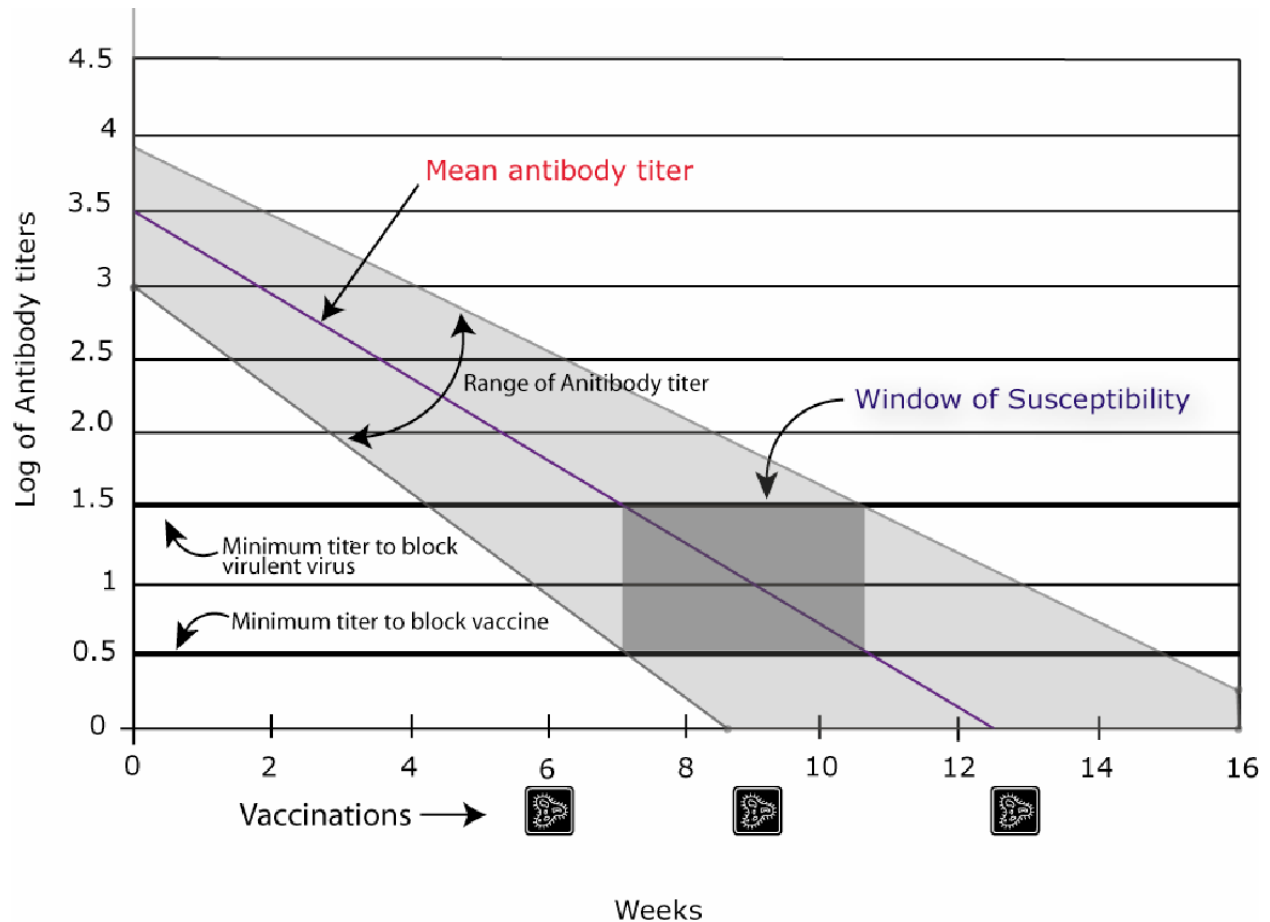
Just as important as actually doing the vaccines and deworming is recording it. If nobody knows it was done, it doesn't count! Please help us prevent this by keeping your records updated, and bringing them with your foster cats and kittens when it's time for their surgeries.

## Kittens and Vaccinations

When a kitten is born and first nurses on the mother, the kitten gets a dose of colostrum from the mother; this colostrum is filled with good immune cells, also known as Maternally Derived Antibodies (MDA), to protect the kitten from common feline illnesses. MDA will interfere with the kitten's ability to make their own protective immune cells. This dose of colostrum starts to disappear from the body of the kitten between 4-8 weeks of age, but can last in the kitten up to 16 weeks, and we cannot predict the exact timing in the loss of the protection they receive from the MDA.

The idea of using a Modified Live Vaccine (MLV) is to stimulate the kitten's own immune system into making more protective immune cells, as the MDA disappears. By giving the

dose of vaccine every 2-4 weeks, we are able to minimize that “window of susceptibility”, which is the time when the MDA disappears and when the kitten is able to make their own immune cells to fight infectious disease. When we vaccinate kittens at 6 weeks of age that did not get any colostrum, the vaccine may be effective immediately. Kittens that received a large dose of colostrum, or MDA, may not be able to have a response to the vaccine until they are 18 weeks old; the best strategy then is to give the dose of vaccine every 2-3 weeks until the kitten is 18 weeks old.



## Vaccine Reactions

Vaccine reactions can include, but are not limited to:

- Limping
- Not eating or drinking the normal amounts for 1-2 days
- Lethargy
- Pain at the sight of injection
- Unwillingness to play
- Low-grade fever

If any of these symptoms do not improve by 48 hours after the injection, please contact the foster coordinator.

**A more serious reaction happens fairly instantaneously and includes; severe vomiting, diarrhea, facial swelling, and difficulty breathing. The kitten will need to be seen by a vet IMMEDIATELY.**



## Kitten Development and Vaccine Schedule:

The following is some general information about what to expect at each stage of development. Remember that these are averages. Please weigh your kittens regularly to keep an eye on development. Daily is best for the first 3 weeks or at any time if the kittens get sick, otherwise every 2-3 days is fine. Kittens should gain about four ounces per week, on average.

Newborn	Completely dependent on mother. Eyelids closed, ears folded forward – cannot see, or hear. Sense of smell is the first to develop completely and is the most developed sense of birth.
2-3 Days	Umbilical cord falls off.
One Week	Eyes begin to open – all kittens have blue eyes. Kittens huddle together for security and warmth.
10 Days	Ears unfold, hearing will develop. Can move along with belly on the ground, “paddling” limbs for movement.
Two Weeks	Being to play with littermates, learning how to socialize. Can stand and balance, but cannot walk easily. Teething begins. Eyes are fully open.
16-18 Days	Incisors (tiny front teeth) break through.
20-24 Days	Canine teeth break through.
Three Weeks	Mobile and eager to explore, making mock-aggressive rushes and stalking littermates. Cannot retract claws. Weigh the kittens regularly to keep an eye on development. Should be played with and handled at least 1 hour every day for good socialization.
24-28 Days	Molars begin to break through.
Four Weeks	Introduce solid food in 3-4 small meals per day. Begin litter box training. Will begin wrestling with littermates. Will receive first deworming (Strongid). Ask your mentor for help with dosing and administration.
Five Weeks	Learning to hunt by pouncing on toys and each other.
Six Weeks	Adult eye color begins to appear. <b>First vaccination for kittens.</b> Kittens are vaccinated against common viruses that cause upper respiratory infection and feline distemper (FVRCP). Receive second deworming.
Eight Weeks and Older	Mom and kittens need to be brought to the shelter for their scheduled surgery appointment. The exam will include: FeLV and FIV testing if not previously done, deworming if needed, spay or neuter (if weight is at least 2 pounds and kitten is healthy), microchip, treatment for fleas and ear mites as directed by the veterinarian, and possibly another vaccine. <b>Second vaccination occurs 21 days after the first.</b>

Once your cat/kittens have been vaccinated or given a de-wormer please be sure that the foster coordinator is aware.



**Please let the foster coordinator know if you would like to learn to administer the vaccines yourself; we would love to show you! The foster coordinator's email is [foster@rivco.org](mailto:foster@rivco.org).**

## Vaccines and Deworming Treatments

### Vaccines:

**FVRCP is the vaccine for Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia (URI and Distemper)**

**FVRCP** is given at 6 weeks of age or older depending on when they went through intake.

**2<sup>nd</sup> FVRCP** is given 21 days after the first FVRCP. No later than 30 days after or you will need to restart the series.

**3<sup>rd</sup> FVRCP** is given 21 days after the second FVRCP. No later than 30 days after or you will need to restart the series.

**4<sup>th</sup> FVRCP** is given 21 days after the third FVRCP. No later than 30 days after or you will need to restart the series. This vaccine may not be given if the kitten was vaccinated after its 18 week date with the 3<sup>rd</sup> FVRCP.

### Worming:

**Strongid is for Roundworms. You might see these pass in the stool after treatment - they will look like spaghetti.**

**Strongid** is given at 4 weeks of age or older depending on when they went through intake.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Strongid** is given 14 days after the first dose. This series is repeated every 2 weeks until the kittens have returned for adoption. If you are more than 21 days late you will need to restart the dosing series.

**Droncit is for Tapeworms. You will see rice-looking segments in their stools.**

**Droncit** is given at surgery time if needed (noted by the foster parent). Tapeworms usually do not cause significant problems and may be treated at time of altering.

## Health Concerns

*The following is a list of common medical issues you may encounter as a foster parent with you mother cat and/or kittens. This information is not meant to be extensive, just to give you an idea of what common ailments may look like and how they might be resolved. This is not a substitute for the expert advice of a trained medical professional.*

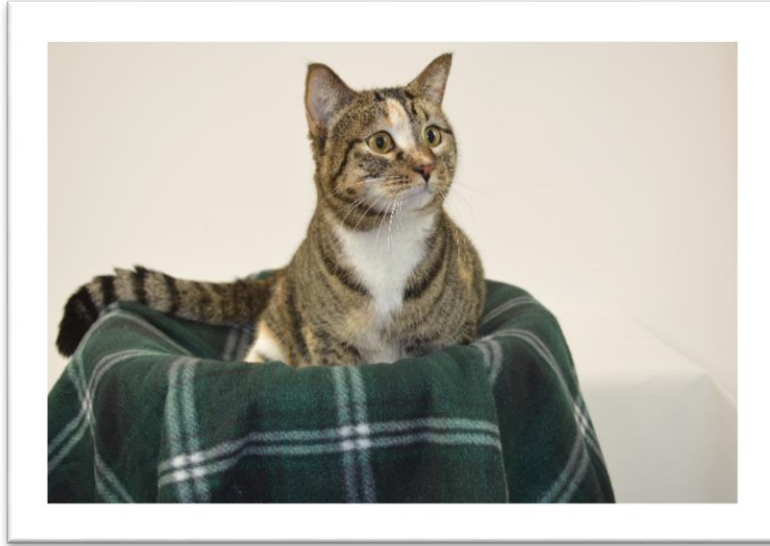
If your foster kitten displays any of these symptoms, call the foster coordinator immediately at (951) 358-7376 or our after-hours line at (951) 358-7387:

Foster Coordinator normal office hours are 8am-5pm Monday through Friday

- Sneezing and/or congestion with green or yellow discharge from the nose and/or eyes.
- Coughing, wheezing, or heavy breathing.
- Diarrhea or vomiting – **this can be life threatening to kittens!**
- Straining to urinate or defecate – **this can be life threatening, especially for male cats!**
- Bleeding from any part of the body.
- Lethargy – kitten seems sleepy all the time.
- Fever.
- Paralysis.
- Extreme change in attitude or behavior.
- Not eating or drinking regularly.



**Please have specifics ready to give when contacting our department.**



## Common Ailments

### Upper Respiratory Infection

Upper respiratory tract infections (URI) or “kitten colds” are common occurrences in shelters. The majority are caused by one of two viruses, although they can have some bacterial components. Signs of URI include congestion, excessive sneezing, fever, discolored (green or yellow) nose or eye discharge, and/or a fever.

Please contact us if you suspect your kitten(s) of having an Upper Respiratory Infection.

If your foster cat/kitten is showing signs of URI, please do the following:

- Make sure the cat/kitten is eating. Cats that are congested often won't eat because they can't smell the food. If they are not eating well, warm up a strong-smelling canned food, and offer it to them. You can also provide them several different options to ensure there is one they like.
  - Cats and kittens should be eating at least 50% of the food offered to them
  - After 24 hours of not eating or eating less than 50%, please give bring your kitten in for SQ fluids and continue this daily until the appetite resumes to more than 50%.
  - If a kitten does not eat for the next meal after the initial SQ fluids, you should begin supplemental force feeding and schedule an appointment with the shelter hospital. Only force feed if you have been trained.
  - If an adult cat does not eat for an additional 24 hours after the initial SQ fluids, contact us, and schedule an appointment with the shelter hospital.
- If the cat/kitten has eye or nose discharge, clean their nose/eyes at least twice daily with a wet, warm washcloth. Gently wipe the eye from the nose side out to the side of the face.
- If the cat/kitten is congested, place them in a room with a humidifier, or in a carrier in a bathroom with the hot shower running (steam) to aid congestion. You can also hold the kitten on your lap. Nothing should ever be added to the water like Vic's Vapor Rub or similar products. Also, never leave a kitten alone in a bathroom with the hot shower running unless it is in the carrier.
  - Place nasal saline drops in the cat/kitten's nose to aid congestion (1 drop per nostril, 2-3 times daily).
  - A product called “Little Noses” can also be used on URI kittens. Please use Little Noses without decongestant (saline-only solution). This product can be

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used as long as needed, and can be used in both nostrils up to three times daily.

- Provide supplemental warmth, especially for young kittens (rice sock, snuggle safe warming disk, etc.).

## Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis is characterized by swelling and/or yellow or green discharge around the eyes. An eye ointment or drops are typically prescribed to treat the infection. *DO NOT ADMINISTER WITHOUT BEING ADVISED TO DO SO.* To administer the ointment hold the kitten's eye open and squeeze the ointment into the eye moving across the eye without touching the tip of the tube to the eye. To administer eye drops hold the kitten's eye open and let then let the drop fall into the inside corner of the eye near the tear duct. Open and close the eye a few times to get ointment or drops worked in well.

To clean the kitten's eyes, use a cotton ball or gauze that is clean with warm water. If the eye is sealed shut you will need to use the warm cotton ball as a compress and let it sit there for a few minutes. This will soften the crusted material around the eye. Once it is soft and pliable you can wipe it from the eye. Start at the area closest to the nose and wipe outward. Don't force the material off of the eye. You may need to continue to let the cotton ball set on the eyelid to soften the material for longer. Once everything has been cleaned around the eye you can administer eye medications. It will be helpful to the kitten if you can gently wipe the eye clean multiple times a day. If you do not have a cotton ball or gauze square you can use a soft washcloth. Make sure that you use a clean washcloth each time. Never share between kittens either.

## Vomiting

Vomiting can be very dangerous for kittens because they dehydrate so quickly. Vomiting is not as common as diarrhea, so it's especially troubling, especially if the kitten is vomiting repeatedly. Call the foster coordinator right away.

## Dehydration

Dehydration can kill a small kitten quickly. Staff should train you on how to do a skin tenting test. With smaller kittens another way to test hydration is to feel the gums. If they are sticky instead of slippery, the kitten is dehydrated. Also look at the color of the gums. If it is white with no color, please report this when you call the foster coordinator.

## Diarrhea

A few things too keep in mind when examining your kitten's poop:

- A little bit of bright red blood on poop is ok. So is a little bit of bright red blood on a kitten's bottom. It's usually a reaction to something that they ate, new food, stress, new location, etc.



- A **lot** of blood is not ok.

Diarrhea is probably the most common problem with kittens. Runny poop seems to be a kitten's preferred response to almost all stress or illness. It can be dangerous for kittens because the water lost in the stool tends to dehydrate them rapidly.

**If diarrhea persists for 3 days, inform your foster coordinator, who will have you do the following:**

- Contact the foster coordinator with the weights of all of your kittens so that medication for the appropriate dose can be made up. You will need to pick up the following from the shelter:
  - Prescription for Panacur (fenbendazole) daily for 5 days. This is an oral prescription medication available from the Riverside County Department of Animal Services shelter hospital.
  - Marquis dose #2. This is an oral prescription medication available from the Riverside County Department of Animal Services shelter hospital.
- Optional: In addition to medication, give each kitten one teaspoon of canned pumpkin each day. Be sure to use plain canned pumpkin only, not pumpkin pie mix or spiced pumpkin mix.
  - **If the kitten is very sick, please bring your kitten(s) to the shelter for exam.**

**Please note that any time during this protocol, if your kittens are vomiting or dehydrated, have liquid (not forming) diarrhea, diarrhea dripping from their bottoms, refusing to eat for more than 8 hours, or acting lethargic, you should immediately alert the foster coordinator.**

## **General and Emergency Veterinary Care**

- Riverside County Department of Animal Services covers all **approved** medical expenses for the cats and kittens in the shelter's foster program. General medical care for Riverside County Department of Animal Services foster cats is provided at the direction of the veterinarian and veterinary technician at Riverside County Department of Animal Services on-site hospital.

- Once a foster cat or kitten is in your care, you are responsible for transporting him or her to the shelter veterinarian for necessary medical care. Always use a secure carrier, designed specifically for companion animals, when transporting cats.
- Foster parents **must not** medicate or shave any cats in their care without prior approval from the foster coordinator.

## **Adoption Procedures for Cats/Kittens in Foster Care**

- Kittens are available for adoption after 8 weeks of age as long as they are 2 pounds, healthy, and spayed/neutered.
- Foster parents who wish to adopt their foster cats are required to pay an adoption fee and go through the adoption process.
- All cats and kittens must be spayed or neutered before the adoption can be finalized.

### **Riverside County Department of Animal Services Foster Adoption Fees**

<b>Kitten 8wks-4mos</b>	<b>\$65</b>
<b>Kitten 5mos-1yr</b>	<b>\$45</b>
<b>Cat Over 1yr</b>	<b>\$25</b>
<b>Senior Adoption</b>	<b>50% Off</b>
<b>Active Duty and Veteran Adoption Free</b>	

**Foster cat or kitten adoption fee-** \$25.00

# A “Free” Kitten is *Never* Free!

## A “Free” Kitten:

## A Kitten from Riverside County Department of Animal Services:

–Average Costs –

- New Patient Vet Exam - \$45-55
- Spay/Neuter - \$200/\$130
- FeLV and FIV Testing - \$41
- Microchip (and Registration) - \$50
- FVRCP Vaccinations - \$18-25
- Treatment for Parasites (Fleas, worms, etc.) - \$50

– Included in the Adoption Fee –

- Health Exam
- All Medical Care Prior to Adoption
- Spay/Neuter Surgery
- Microchip, including registration
- FVRCP Vaccinations
- Rabies Vaccination\*
- Treatment for Parasites (Fleas, Worms, Ear Mites, etc.)
- Free Vet Exam

\*For cats over 16 weeks of age

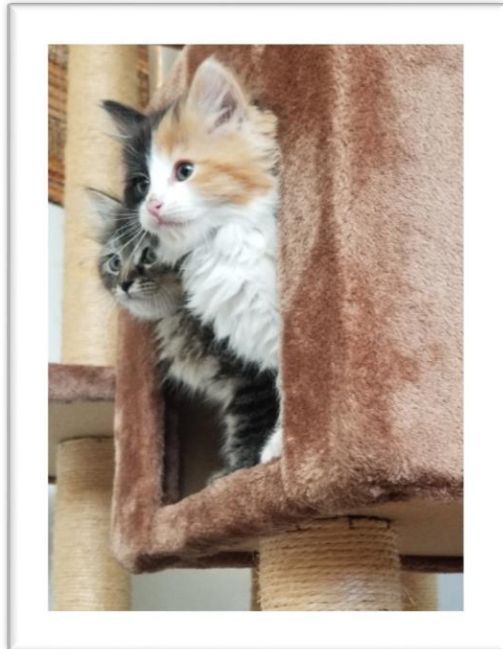
TOTAL:  
\$334-\$421 or more  
(updated February 2017)

TOTAL:  
Foster Cat/kitten-\$32.50

## Showing Off your Kittens at Riverside County Department of Animal Services Offsite Adoption Sites

When you bring your foster cats to Riverside County Department of Animal Services for adoption purposes, it is important to have a brief write-up about each cat's personality, and the kind of household that would be most suitable. You can fill this information out on the personality profile page we provided you with when you picked up your kittens

from the shelter. If you have photos of your foster cats, please consider providing those as well. Many adopters love to receive “baby” photos of their newest family member!



## Returning Your Foster Cat/Kittens

When your foster cats and kittens are ready for adoption, you can either schedule them for surgery so that you may take them home with you to market them, or you can bring them back to the shelter to stay until they are adopted. The following describes what steps to take for either scenario.

### Bringing Them in for Surgery

- Spay/neuter appointments are made 2-3 weeks in advance during the busy season. Contact the Foster Coordinator when your kittens turn 6-7 weeks old to set up appointment. Kittens must be. If your kittens are all over 1.75lbs and you do not have a surgery date set yet, please email the foster coordinator to request one. If you need to cancel an appointment, please email the foster coordinator with as much notice as possible.
- Please bring your kittens/cats to the Spay/Neuter Clinic for surgery between 8:00AM-9:00AM. If you cannot make the appointed time, please make arrangements through the Foster Coordinator ahead of time and we can arrange drop off the night before.
- Please contact pre-adopters and let them know the day their kitten is being altered. Kittens can be picked up between 3:00pm-5:00pm.
- Pick up food plate first thing in the morning preferable by 6 am. Do not feed breakfast. Water is fine. The anesthesia can make them sick and we don't want the kittens to vomit. They can choke on their own vomit and this can be life-threatening.

- Bring kittens to the shelter for surgeries. If you cannot make the appointed time, please make arrangements through the shelter ahead of time to drop off the night before.
- Please complete the Feline Personality Profile sheet for each of the kittens. Your information and recommendations are a big help in finding them the perfect forever homes.
- Fill out the Foster Return Form completely. There is a place on the form to mark whether a kitten is pre-adopted, if you are picking them up after surgery, etc. This will only take a couple of minutes.
- Hand in your foster supplies (if applicable) to a staff member who is checking you in.



*Photo by Debbie Brusius*

### **Bringing Them Back to the Shelter**

- Please contact the foster coordinator to make arrangements for your kittens to return to the shelter. This way we will make sure they have a kennel when they arrive. Also, if your kitties are coming back to stay at the shelter to be adopted

and *have not yet been altered*, please be sure to mark it on the Foster Return Form so we can make sure they get put on the hospital 'needs surgery' list.

- Please complete and turn in the Feline Personality Profile sheet for each of your kittens.
- Fill out the Foster Drop-Off Information Sheet completely. There is a place on the form to mark whether a kitten is pre-adopted. This will only take a couple of minutes.
- Hand in foster supplies (if applicable) to a Shelter Associate.

## Cleaning Between Your Foster Groups

The joy of letting go of one foster group is knowing that they will be going to loving homes while you are able to take in another that may not otherwise be able to find shelter to grow in such a loving environment. Please consider the following guidelines when transitioning between groups.

Once you have taken the kittens back to the shelter for surgery it is time to clean and prepare your kitten room for your next foster group. You will need to remove all bedding, and wash it in hot water with bleach added. Follow your machine's guidelines for adding bleach to the wash load.

You will also need to clean the litter box. Empty all of the contents, and wash with hot soapy water. Rinse well and then fill with hot water, add one cup of bleach and let it sit for at least 10 minutes. Rinse and dry well.



For food and water dishes you can run them through the dishwasher and they will be cleaned for your next group. Or, you can clean them as you did the litter box if you don't have a dishwasher.

If you have carpeted floors you will need to vacuum well and spot clean any areas that need it. If you have a carpet cleaner you should use it between groups. If you do not have carpet, sweep and mop the floor. Once the floor is dry, mop again with a bleach water

solution (1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water) and let it sit for ten minutes. Afterwards you will want to rinse with clear water and then let it dry.

You will need to wipe down all surfaces with a bleach water solution or Clorox Cleanup. You should also wipe the walls down. You do not have to do all of the wall but at least the bottom 3 feet.

If you have a bed in the room, change the covering on it. If you have a chair or couch in the room you will need to vacuum it and spot clean if needed.

## Foster Program FAQ's

### ***How do I become a foster parent?***

Visit our website at [www.RCDAS.org](http://www.RCDAS.org) go to Volunteer/FosterCare- Complete the Foster application and submit. You will receive a welcome e-mail once you have submitted your application and your email address will be added to our Foster Member Group.

### ***What is required of me as a foster parent?***

Providing a safe, 'kitten-proofed' room in your home that contains the kittens' necessities; food, water, bedding, litter box, toys, etc. You are responsible for ensuring that your kitten receives any scheduled medical treatments on time, is healthy, and well socialized. Please see pages [5-10](#) and [27-31](#).

### ***I found a litter of kittens. Can I foster them through your program?***

Yes, We will try to work with you on setting you up as foster parent. If you cannot foster this litter it may take us some time to find a foster home. We will do our best to work with you.

### ***What are the requirements for a foster room?***

The foster room needs to be a designated place for your foster kittens to live the entire time. Riverside County Department of Animal Services recommends a bathroom for ease of cleaning. A spare bedroom, or other room could work as well. This room will need to be 'kitten-proofed' and have plenty of space for a litter box, food and water dishes, as well as sleep and play areas. Please see pages [8-9](#).

### ***What supplies do I need to provide myself?***

Riverside County Department of Animal Services will provide you basic supplies as well as provide all vaccines and medication necessary for your kittens. We will also provide you with a quality dry and wet kitten food diet. Litter is also available if needed. Foster parents generally supply litter box, food dishes, toys and scratching implement, bedding, and other small incidentals. However, if you need help with some of these supplies, we will do our best to help you. [Page 10](#)

### ***How do I get a group of foster kittens?***

Once your application has been approved and added to our Member Group List-You will receive e-mails of the animals in need of foster at RCDAS. Then Contact our Foster Coordinator at 951-358-7376 to make arrangements to pick up your foster supplies.

### ***How much do I need to supervise my foster group?***

You need to do welfare checks on your foster group three times a day. This is to make sure everyone is healthy, eating, and using the litter box. You need to spend about 1-2 hours per day interacting with your foster group so that they become well socialized. Please see page [13](#).



### ***Can my foster kittens and mom cat interact with my resident pets?***

You must wait at least two weeks before introducing vaccinated foster kittens to your resident pets. You cannot introduce unvaccinated kittens to your resident pets until five days after the kittens receive their first vaccines. If your kittens or resident pet sick are sick, they cannot interact with each other. Finally, if your kittens are too small to be tested for FeLV and FIV, you should not introduce them to your resident cat(s). You must supervise all interactions between your kittens and resident animals. Please see page [13](#).

### ***Can my children interact with the foster kittens?***

We encourage your children to have supervised interaction with foster kittens. Children should not be permitted to handle newborn kittens. Caution and direct supervision is a must! Please see page [13](#).

### ***Do we bottle feed kittens?***

Riverside County Department of Animal Services does not intentionally take in young kittens who will need to be bottle fed. However, occasionally a situation arises where kittens need to be bottle fed. If this is the case we will train our foster parents to bottle feed, or place the kittens with a foster parent who is experienced at bottle feeding kittens. Please see [page 14](#).

### ***What is the next step for potential adopters once they meet my foster kittens?***

If you have an interested party that would like to adopt one or more of your kittens please have them fill out an adoption contract as well as the adoption fees to the shelter for processing.

### ***Do I need to give my own vaccines? Can I learn?***

You will make appointments with the shelter to assure kittens get their vaccines on time. This also gives our Veterinary team a chance to check out your fosters progress.

### ***Who do I call for help?***

The foster coordinator will be your first point of contact for any questions or concerns you may have about your group.

### ***If my foster kittens get sick do I take them to my own vet?***

All veterinary care will be provided through Riverside County Department of Animal Services. Foster parents are **not** permitted to seek veterinary care from outside clinics. Any visits to outside veterinarians that are not pre-approved will be the financial responsibility of the foster parent.

### ***What do I do if my own cats get sick?***

Your kittens should be kept separately from your resident cats. However, we do recognize that cross contamination can happen. If your own cats get sick it is your responsibility to seek veterinary treatment. Remember there is always an inherent risk of disease when you bring new animals into your home. This is why we require that all animals in the home are current on vaccinations.

***Do my resident pets have to be up to date on their vaccines?***

For everyone's protection and safety your resident pets are required to be up to date on vaccines.

***Do my resident pets have to be spayed or neutered before I foster kittens?***

Yes. Riverside County Department of Animal Services can help you set up an appointment to have this done through our on-site clinic.

***Can my resident pets come to Riverside County Department of Animal Services for care? Is there a discount?***

We do offer discounted vaccines. Please inquire at the front desk for pricing and availability.

***What if I have to leave out of town unexpectedly?***

Contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible so that we can find alternate placement for your kittens.



Department Of Animal Services  
Julie Bank Director

Outgoing Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Person ID# \_\_\_\_\_ Vaccine **Date** \_\_\_\_\_ Return Date:  
\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

### FOSTER CARETAKER AGREEMENT

Animal ID(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

The parties agree that:

The Foster Caretaker shall provide the animal(s) with adequate care, including, but not limited to food, water, shelter, grooming and humane training. The Foster Caretaker understands the animal(s) shall remain the sole property of Riverside County Animal Services (RCAS).

The animals shall be returned to RCAS upon request by RCAS, or if the Foster Caretaker is no longer able to adequately care the animals, or if the Foster Caretaker is relocating outside Riverside County. The Foster Caretaker understands and acknowledges that he/she does not have the right or authority to keep the foster animal(s) or to place the foster animal(s) in other homes or places with other individuals unless permission is given in writing by RCAS Foster Care Management Personnel.

The Foster Caretaker agrees that should the animal(s) require extensive medical treatment, RCAS may request the immediate return of the animal(s) and may treat or euthanize the animals for humane reasons. This decision is the sole responsibility of the Department’s Chief Veterinarian or his designee.

If the Foster Caretaker elects to take the foster animal to their own veterinarian without authorization, the Caretaker will be responsible for any expenses incurred. The Caretaker will supply RCAS with medical documentation from his/her veterinarian verifying diagnosis and treatment. In the unfortunate event the animal(s) dies or becomes so ill during foster care as to warrant humane euthanasia, the Foster Caretaker will notify RCAS by the next business day.

RCAS will not reimburse for any expenses incurred for any accessories, i.e.: food litter, toys, treats, bedding etc. purchased for the foster animals, without prior written authorization.

The Foster Caretaker agrees to defend, indemnify and hold the RCAS harmless from any direct or remote and consequential damages arising out of this foster arrangement. This agreement represents the entire agreement between the parties and any modification will be made in writing and signed by both the Foster Caretaker and the representative of the RCAS Foster Care Management.

Foster Caretaker Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
For RCDAS Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

